

Washington, DC—Today, Congressman John Olver, Ranking Member of the Transportation and Housing Appropriations Subcommittee, along with Senator John Kerry, Congressman Richard Neal and the Massachusetts Department of Transportation, announced that the U.S. Department of Transportation has signed a \$72.8 million grant agreement for the final design and construction of the “Knowledge Corridor” along the Connecticut River rail line in western Massachusetts, bringing the project another step closer to completion. The competitive grant award is part of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) High-Speed and Intercity Passenger Rail program.

Congressman John Olver, Ranking Member of the Transportation and Housing Appropriations Subcommittee said, “This project represents a significant investment in the region and I am pleased to see it moving ahead. High speed rail in the Knowledge Corridor will not only spur job creation, but also provide an alternative transit option for commuters along the densely-populated I-91 corridor.”

"Every penny we invest in high speed rail reaps lighter traffic, better infrastructure, and jobs, and saves time and money," said Sen. Kerry. "I'm thrilled this funding is going right where it belongs."

"The successful completion of the Knowledge Corridor rail line will help transform the transportation infrastructure of western Massachusetts. Following the release of additional EPA funds for Union Station this week, today's announcement represents significant progress for two important regional public works projects," said Congressman Richard E. Neal.

The project, with a total budget of \$75.6 million, will rehabilitate the existing Connecticut River rail line. Once completed, Amtrak Vermonter service will be rerouted to the line providing a more direct route, faster service and restored access to the cities of Northampton and Greenfield. The Vermonter will make stops at the former Amtrak station at Northampton and the new ARRA-funded intermodal transit center in Greenfield. The project will create an estimated 626 jobs during construction and 155 permanent jobs by the 5th full year of operation.

MassDOT will oversee the project construction, which will be done by Pan Am and is expected to take approximately two years.

“Projects like this do not happen without strong support at both the federal and state levels,” said MassDOT Rail and Transit Administrator Richard Davey. “The improvements we make to passenger rail service today will lead to long-term economic and environmental benefits not only for the Pioneer Valley, but for the region as a whole.”

Congressman John Olver added, “The Obama Administration realizes that high-speed rail is an important component of a modernized transportation system. Without an adequate investment in passenger rail, population growth will create more congested highways and airspace, increased travel delays, and environmental degradation. Not only do these grants provide a down payment on that investment, they will also create jobs at a time when they are desperately needed.”

The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) provided \$8 billion in competitive grants to jumpstart high-speed rail development in 100 to 600 mile corridors across America. The U.S. Department of Transportation’s Federal Railroad Administration received 259 applications totaling \$57 billion.

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